

Annual Progress and Services Report 2006

Chafee Foster Care Independence Program Report on FY 2006 Activities and an Application for FY 2007 funds

Accomplishments achieved and planned activities for each of the first five purposes of CFCIP:

1. Assist youth to transition from dependency to self-sufficiency:

The Children's Division (CD) has used the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (CFCIP) funds to staff one state level coordinator. The state level coordinator position is responsible for program development and coordination, implementation, resource development, training, administrative oversight, technical assistance, and policy development. For FY 2007 the position and responsibilities of the state level coordinator will remain the same with the additional responsibility of contract management and oversight.

Children's Division currently uses CFCIP funds to staff up to 15 ILP Specialist positions located throughout the state. The Specialists work directly and collaboratively with the case managers, foster parents, contracted providers, and youth. They are responsible for local program coordination, service delivery, community resource development, contractor compliance, on-going consultation and education to agency staff, foster parents, and other providers. They provide direct services to youth in skill assessments and training on a one-to-one basis and in small groups. The Specialists also provide services through youth camps, retreats, and conferences. Referrals for CFCIP services are commonly made to the ILP Specialist from youth's case manager, foster care providers, other agencies or by self-referral.

In FY 2007 it is the intent to disperse the duties of the ILP Specialists to contracted providers and to seven regional state employees and no longer having ILP Specialists. The duties they were responsible for, such as local program coordination, service delivery, community resource development, etc, will continue to be performed in a more team oriented manner, versus a specialized concept. As mentioned, some of these duties, such as direct service delivery to youth, will be performed by contracted providers. Other duties, such as training, will be performed by Children's Division employees. The seven regional employees will be largely responsible for contract monitoring and compliance but may also help with program coordination. Case managers will become more knowledgeable and responsible for ensuring that the older youth they work with have their needs met. Adolescent case managers, which are utilized in the northern region of

Missouri, and specifically trained on CFCIP and services available to older youth in foster care will also play an essential role in the effort to educate staff and meet the needs of older youth.

The purpose of Missouri's Independent Living Program (ILP) is to assist foster and former foster youth achieve positive outcomes in their transition to self-sufficiency. Since 1997, Missouri has provided independent living services to youth ages 14-21. This past year, CD assigned a workgroup, consisting of CD staff from all levels, to take an in-depth look at current policy, practice and outcomes of its program as well as programs across the nation to be able to make recommendations to create a program that is financially responsible, accountable and sustainable and meets the needs of youth. From this workgroup three essential recommendations were made and are in the process of being implemented in FY 2007. These recommendations include a change in practice, with the development of Older Youth Transition Action Teams; a change in policy, with the incorporation of a chapter in the Child Welfare Manual designated entirely to working with older youth in foster care; and a comprehensive tool, the Adolescent Family Support Team Guide and Individualized Action Plan, to aid in transition planning for older youth.

Children entering into custody of the Children's Division have differing experiences, levels of resiliency, and unique needs. Missouri's ILP is designed to allow maximum flexibility in eligibility for services and access to additional funding on behalf of eligible youth and young adults to address individual needs.

Youth are provided information about available Chafee services by the ILP Specialists, case managers or life skills facilitators. Services are to be used to assist youth in complementing their own efforts to achieve self-sufficiency and to assure they recognize and accept personal responsibility in preparation for and the successful transition from adolescence to adulthood. All youth ages 16 and over are required to have an independent living case plan regardless of their permanency goal. They shall be involved in their case planning to address the development of skills and resources needed to facilitate their transition to self-sufficiency. In FY 2007, the Adolescent Family Support Team Guide and Individualized Action Plan will be introduced to case managers to utilize for development and documentation of the youth's transition plan.

Chafee funds will also be utilized to continue supporting Missouri's Aftercare program for youth who have exited state custody at 17.5 and older, but have not yet reached age 21. Additionally, funds will be used for administration and facilitation of the foster youth advisory boards.

Life skills training is available in all regions of the state. A state core curriculum is used and modules are added to meet needs of youth in different geographical areas. Skills training vary in length and generally last six to nine months, meeting once per week for two hours in a classroom setting. Field trips, seminars, workshops, weekend retreats, camps, and community service projects are also used to supplement the program. Youth receive a small stipend and other incentives for attending each training session and completing homework.

In FY 2007 the life skills training is expected to be provided by contracted providers, including contracted transitional living programs and contracted residential programs. Children's Division will no longer require a six to nine month course but will recommend providers develop competency based training modules for each set of life skills taught. The state life skills core curriculum will continue to be the foundation for each provider to teach from, however, the state will not dictate how these core life skills are taught.

Policy at the Children's Division currently requires all staff to begin exit planning for all youth ages 17 and older and for those who will be leaving foster care after age 18. The purpose of conducting an exit planning interview is to identify anticipated service needs and arrange those for older youth who will soon be exiting foster care. An exit interview must take place at least 6 months prior to the youth leaving custody; for all youth at ages 17 or older; and annually, for all youth over the age of 18 who remain in care and custody. In FY 2007 the Adolescent FST Guide and Individualized Action Plan will be replacing the current exit planning and independent living plan form and policy. After internal review, through peer record reviews, 52% of older youth case files had an independent living plan documented in the case record. To increase and strengthen this planning the Adolescent FST Guide and Individualized Action Plan was developed and is intended to be a proactive, youth driven case planning tool. This tool should be discussed and utilized at least every six months at the Family Support Team Meeting with youth ages 14-21.

The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (JCYOI) is in partnership with Jackson County Children's Division. JCYOI is a national endeavor to assist youth in foster care in making successful transitions to self-sufficiency and independence. JCYOI's goal is to bring together people and resources needed to assist youth in making the necessary contacts they need for employment, education, housing, health care, and supportive personal and community connections. JCYOI began partnering with Missouri in December 2001 in the Kansas City area. CD will continue to work with JCYOI to assist them in educating the communities to support foster youth and to understand the importance of involving youth in the decision making process that affects their

lives. JCYOI's purpose is to accomplish three key strategies: youth leadership boards, community partnership boards, and Opportunity Passports. The Opportunity Passport is designed to organize resources and create opportunities for foster and Aftercare youth. It assists youth in accumulating assets and direct experience with money management. Youth who apply and are selected to receive a Passport will receive an individual development account (a matched savings account), a personal debit account, and a variety of available community services at reduced rates or obtain preferential treatment.

2. Help youth receive the education, training, and services necessary to obtain equipment:

All youth should have a minimum of a GED as an overall goal. Many efforts were made to help youth gain job training and work experience this year.

In an effort to keep current with technological needs, youth are provided with the opportunity to attend computer camp. Children's Division contracts with Instructional Access to provide computers and training for youth. In Spring 2006, 100 youth were selected to participate in the 2 ½ day training camp. Each received a new computer system with printer upon completion of the program.

Youth received job training, job mentoring and placement, and social support. Various community members representing their professions were used as guest speakers. Graduates of life skills training return to the program to serve as paid interns, class co-facilitators, office assistant and serve as tutors, mentors, and chaperones in activities with younger foster children.

CD staff including case managers and ILP Specialists referred youth to Job Corps, Americorps, and all branches of the military.

Missouri's Workforce Development also offers five Job Corps centers that Missouri youth can attend. Three are located in Missouri. Job Corps is a residential education and employment training program. It provides vocational and academic skills to young adults between the ages of 16 and 24. The program provides youth accepted into the program with room, board, and spending money while they learn. Job Corps is committed to providing a safe environment for its students to ensure they acquire the skills and preparation they need to succeed in the workplace.

The Missouri Mentoring Partnership (MMP) provides funding to nine community partnerships to implement structured work site and community-based mentoring. When youth are referred they must

complete a 20-30 hours (based on the youth's learning capacity) job readiness training. The curriculum focuses on "soft skills" training, resume preparation and mock interviewing. Once the youth passes the job readiness training, they can begin their job search and then a job mentor is assigned.

In the Spring of 2006, Missouri Mentoring Partnership held a "mini-conference" on "Life After High School" which introduce youth in foster care and juvenile detention to choices regarding post-secondary education choices and steps to achieve these goals. Information on Education and Training Vouchers and the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program was shared with youth at this conference.

In FY 2007, it is the intent of the Children's Division to pursue greater development and utilization of the "Shared Youth Vision" collaborative effort. The Division of Labor, the Children's Division, the Division of Youth Services, the Department of Justice have come together to discuss how this collaboration can be an effective strategy to meeting the needs of youth in their agency.

3. Help youth prepare for and enter post-secondary training and educational institutions:

Early and on-going support for education is extremely important in preparing youth for self-sufficiency. Education is being approached in a comprehensive and integrated manner in the early years. Setting and monitoring educational goals will assist youth in understanding the importance of having a vision of educational success. The State of Missouri is committed to ensuring youth have the opportunity and support to access post-secondary education or training.

Educational services and supports are also available to any foster youth to assist them in achieving their educational goals. Services are provided based on the youth's educational needs. Educational supports can include an education advocate, tutoring, individualized plans, and other needs necessary for the youth to be educationally successful.

With the passage of the Stable and Safe Families Act, Missouri now offers Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) program. Missouri uses ETV funding to expand and strengthen its post secondary educational assistance to eligible youth.

The purpose of the ETV program is to provide resources to eligible young adults to apply toward the cost of attendance at post-secondary vocational/educational institutions. Eligible ETV program participants are youth who are eligible for services under Missouri's Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and youth who were adopted or achieve legal guardianship after the youth 16th birthday. Young adults who are receiving financial assistance through ETV on their 21st birthday may

continue to receive ETV services up until their 23rd birthday, provided they are enrolled in a post-secondary education or training program and are making satisfactory progress toward completion of that program.

Youth applicants must be graduating high school seniors, have their high school diploma, be completing their G.E.D. or have a G.E.D. certificate. Youth must be preparing for enrollment in post-secondary education, have been accepted for enrollment or are presently continuing their education at an institution of higher learning including a vocation/technical school. Youth must be making satisfactory progress (minimum GPA of 2.0 or otherwise agreed upon) and provide a copy of a transcript verifying their GPA in order to receive continuing assistance. If youth are attending a program which does not use grades to document progress, the youth must provide a letter from the program verifying the youth is making satisfactory progress.

Funds provided under the ETV program may be used for expenses related to the cost of attendance as defined in section 472 of the Higher Education Act.

Missouri offers different types of post-secondary institutions, which provides education and/or training beyond the high school level. There are regionally accredited institutions of higher education in Missouri which includes two-year colleges, four-year colleges and universities and state colleges. There are accredited independent nonprofit two-year colleges, four-year colleges and universities, technical and professional institutions, theological schools, and seminaries. There is also a long list of proprietary institutions that may be accredited and unaccredited but are certified to operate by Missouri Department of Higher Education that generally offers education and training designed to prepare graduates for direct entry into specific occupations or professions.

4. Provide personal and emotional support to youth through mentors and the promotion of interactions with dedicated adults:

The ability of young people transitioning out of or who have exited foster care to develop a support network, and the influence of informal role models to serve as mentors in a support network is critical. Missouri currently offers personal and emotional support to young people through job placement, formal and informal mentors. Committed and caring adults are essential in guiding young people and helping them maneuver in their community.

The Missouri Mentoring Partnership (MMP) provides resource coordination for youth and volunteer mentors recruited from the community. These mentors provide positive role modeling, friendship

and guidance around employment and parenting issues to youth who are entering the workplace or have become parents.

Community service or volunteering is a critical component in our life skills training program. We find that youth who volunteer in community service programs have an opportunity to meet and develop relationships with adults and other youth who are involved in the same projects as well as develop work skills.

The Missouri Children's Division promotes interaction between youth and dedicated adults through the Transitional Living Advocate program. Through this program youth are connected with adults who become their advocate or mentor. These adults receive 18 hours of training from Children's Division staff on adolescent issues, including three (3) hours each in cultural/race sensitivity, ILP life skills training overview, adolescent development with an emphasis on what to expect from adolescent behavior, emotional obstacles out-of-home care youth must overcome, adolescent sexuality and behavior management via natural consequences. These adult advocates provide the youth a safe place to stay, continued life skills training, encouragement and guidance in regard to employment, education and/or training, and preparation for successful transition from CD custody.

The Casey Family Programs "Ready, Set, Fly" curriculum for in-service training of foster parents was available in February of 2004. This training is provided as a supportive tool foster parents can use with youth working in the independent life skills classes to help them practice their skills learned in the home.

In FY 2007, the State Youth Advisory Board plans to reorganize the peer mentors program that they felt was a beneficial program. The State Youth Advisory Board would like to initiate peer mentoring through organizing foster youth support groups at local schools.

5. Provide financial, housing, counseling, employment, education, and other appropriate support and services to former foster care recipients between 18 and 21 years of age:

Missouri continues to provide services and support for youth in foster care or former foster care youth between 18 and 21 years of age. While in foster care, these older youth are provided with the same services as the younger youth. In addition, older foster youth also receive education, training, and other services necessary to obtain employment, prepare for and enter post-secondary education and training.

Chafee services are available for foster youth ages 14-21. Youth who exit foster care on their 17.5 birthday and have not yet reached age 21 are eligible to receive Chafee Aftercare services. Youth may access Chafee services as needed while in the Division's care and custody or as a former foster youth.

Aftercare services are flexible, short term and used as a safety net to meet the needs of the youth after they have exited Children's Division custody. The needs and array of services vary depending on the need of the former foster youth. Chafee funds may be expended for a variety of reasons and should be used as a support for the young adult, not an on-going supplemental funding source. Aftercare services may include emergency/crisis intervention services, housing/room and board, educational/job training/employment assistance, and other support services.

Room and board services are only available to youth who exited custody at age 18 or after, but they have not yet reached age 21. Room and board may include security and utility deposits, rent, utilities, food, start-up kits, basic necessities, and basic furniture. For fiscal year 2006, approximately \$371,975, or 12.4%, of Missouri's Chafee allotment has been spent on room and board.

Support services provided include life skills training, transportation, child care, clothing, and other expenses as needed. Youth may receive up to a lifetime maximum of \$3,500.00 for any one or a combination of all these categorical services during their eligibility period, excluding post-secondary educational and training assistance.

Collaboration activities achieved and planned with other Federal and State programs for youth:

Missouri holds annual stakeholder meetings to gather input about the CFCIP and to collaborate and engage with community partners. This stakeholder meeting includes involvement from other state agencies, the two Indian Centers in Missouri, and community organizations. This stakeholder meeting was to be expanded into a team model with meetings to be held at least two times per year to give input and review outcomes. In this last year only one stakeholder meeting was held, however it is still the intent of Children's Division to hold more regular and frequent stakeholder team meetings. The National Resource Center on Youth Development has continued to help Missouri develop its stakeholder team. The Children's Division also believes that in this past year, we have been able to utilize stakeholder opinions and input in other arenas, besides the formal stakeholder team format.

The Missouri state level coordinator for the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program sits on the Council for Adolescent and School Health (CASH). This council is administered by the Department of Health and Senior Services and consists of various state and county agencies. Its goal is to support adolescent and school health and to facilitate collaboration to promote a coordinated, family, community, and school approach to achieve healthy adolescent development.

It is through this council, the Children's Division has partnered with Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, and Children's Mercy Hospitals and Clinics to sponsor three regional Mental Health Issues in Adolescence workshops in the fall of 2006. These workshops were designed to target foster parents and youth workers to help them to understand adolescent growth and development, substance abuse issues, sexually transmitted diseases, eating disorders and obesity in teens and to learn about treatment and interventions. Title IV-E funding will be utilized for payment of hours worked by case managers attending this training.

The Children's Division is making revisions to the Transitional Living Program. During this revision of policy and contract, CD has requested assistance and input from various transitional living providers, including Runaway and Homeless Youth grantees, youth in foster care, and the National Resource Center on Youth Development. The Children's Division plans for a new contract and policy to be forthcoming in FY 2007. The new contract would allow for more flexibility with service delivery to youth in the program, including training of independent living skills. Policy will be designed to prompt youth to transition from more restrictive setting to least restrictive setting by the time they reach the age of 20, so that they are better prepared for court release of jurisdiction at 21 years old.

The Children's Division, in FY 2007, plans to attend the National Governor's Association "Strengthening Youth Policy in States". This Policy Institute will help to align state programs, policies and initiatives around a clear vision, reduce confusion due to fragmented administrative structures, and make the delivery of services to youth more cost effective.

Youth in foster care will be participating in the Department of Mental Health (DMH) stakeholder meeting in FY 2007. The youth will be able to give their perspective and input on DMH policy and procedures as it effects and relates to foster care youth.

The Missouri Treasurer's office has established a college savings and investment program for Missourians to contribute to a 529 college savings account for foster children of Missouri. The program, known as BELIEVE was established in December 2005. The Children's

Division assists the Treasurer's office in identifying youth in foster care that are college bound.

An ILP Specialist and the state level coordinator participate in the Older Homeless Adolescent Taskforce. This is a coalition of multiple agencies and organizations within the St. Louis community, coordinated by the Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, that meet quarterly to learn about each other, discuss and develop solutions, and provide community services to prevent and decrease homeless teens in their area.

Training conducted in FY 2006 and planned for FY 2007:

The Missouri Children's Division promotes interaction between youth and dedicated adults through the Transitional Living Advocate program. Through this program youth are connected with adults who become their advocate or mentor. These adults receive 18 hours of training from ILP Specialists on adolescent issues, including three (3) hours each in cultural/race sensitivity, ILP life skills training overview, adolescent development with an emphasis on what to expect from adolescent behavior, emotional obstacles out-of-home care youth must overcome, adolescent sexuality and behavior management via natural consequences. These adult advocates provide the youth a safe place to stay, continued life skills training, encouragement and guidance in regard to employment, education and/or training, and preparation for successful transition from CD custody. In FY 2007, Transitional Living Training will be facilitated by local staff.

The Casey Family Programs "Ready, Set, Fly" curriculum for in-service training of foster parents is provided as a supportive tool foster parents can use with youth working in the independent life skills classes to help them practice their skills learned in the home. In FY 2007 foster parents that are licensed will receive the training through local training staff.

Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment, Adolescent FST Guide and Individualized Action Plan, and permanency issues specific to older youth will be trainings offered in FY 2007 by the state level coordinator, ILP Specialists and youth to Children's Division staff and contracted providers.

Service design and delivery of the trust fund program:

Missouri has not established a trust fund program for youth receiving independent living services or transition assistance.

Activities undertaken to involve youth in State agency efforts, such as the CFSR/PIP process:

Children's Division recognizes the importance of and remains committed to youth involvement and development. When possible, youth are asked to assist in foster parent STARS pre-service and in-service trainings. Other trainings include Transitional Living Advocate and Court Appointed Special Advocates. Youth are often invited to participate and speak on youth panels, facilitate and lead workshops. Youth on the State Youth Advisory Board host and design the entire annual state youth conference. Workshops and conference activities are generally led by the youth.

Through the State Youth Advisory Board (SYAB) and Area Youth Advisory Boards (AYAB), youth have an opportunity to give policy and procedural input to CD staff, provide meaningful leadership training and experiences for board members, and empower board members who, in turn can empower other youth in out-of-home care.

SYAB and AYAB members have been involved in panel presentations and various state/area conferences regarding what the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program has meant to them and how it can make a difference. Other involvement includes:

- Meeting with legislators during the Annual Child Advocacy Day to provide information and advocate for foster care and independent living services.
- Speaking at community meetings to provide information about foster care and adoption issues.
- Participating in agency meetings and committees, such as the PIP Advisory Committee and CQI state level meeting, Federal Regional meetings.
- Participating in other community youth boards or councils, such as FosterClub All-Stars and Department of Mental Health Advisory Council.
- Providing Chafee Foster Care Independence Program and Education Training Voucher Program information to foster parents, youth and community members.

In FY 2007 youth will also help train staff on the new Adolescent FST Guide and Individualized Action Plan, sharing their perspective on why this tool will help youth transition successfully from foster care.

Describe if and how the state has utilized the option to expand Medicaid:

Missouri did not utilize the Medicaid Option to provide medical services to former foster youth who left care at age 18 or older and have not yet reached age 21.

Explain the results of Indian Tribe consultation:

Missouri does not have federally recognized Indian tribes in the state. However, there are two centers, the Heart of America Indian Center and the Southwest Missouri Indian Center, that are active in the state. Representatives were invited from the Indian Centers to participate in the CFCIP stakeholder team.

In FY 2007 the Children's Division intends to actively seek input and consultation from the Indian Centers through engagement in the stakeholder team process but also through requested participation in various workgroups. The Chafee Foster Care Independence Program intends to actively seek out Indian youth who would be interested in participation on Area Youth Advisory Boards and the State Youth Advisory Board.

All benefits and services under the programs are made available to Indian youth in the state on the same basis as other youth. All youth, ages 14 and older, regardless of descent, per policy, are to be referred to the ILP Specialist for support and services.

Describe the specific accomplishments and progress to establish, expand or strengthen the State's postsecondary educational assistance program to achieve the purpose of the Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) program:

Missouri continues to expand the Education and Training Vouchers (ETV) program to serve eligible youth. Missouri does not have a state tuition waiver program and currently uses ETV funding received on October 1, 2004 to assist youth with costs of attendance for post-secondary educational and training programs.

In FY 2007, the Children's Division is going to contract the ETV program with a private provider. It is with this intention that the Children's Division, through specific contract requirements, plans to utilize all of the ETV funding received. CD believes that the contracted provider will have greater access to post-secondary schools and training programs and an expertise on how to maximize this funding for each youth. The contracted provider will be expected to develop and implement community awareness and outreach programs to identify eligible youth. They will include descriptive material such as brochures, posters, and websites to market the Missouri ETV program.

Setting and monitoring educational goals will assist youth in understanding the importance of having a vision of educational success. Current requirements for eligible youth to receive assistance are:

- Youth must demonstrate academic success or motivation in school (generally a "C" average or its equivalency or as otherwise agreed upon with the plan) or in a training program;
- Youth must be accepted to an accredited college/university, vocational school or certified training program;
- Appropriate scholarships, grants and other financial assistance must be explored and utilized, and;
- There must be reasonable assurance the youth will graduate from the educational or training program.

The major portion of the ETV funding will be used to continue and expand the current program by increasing the number of youth served. Since October 2004, approximately 292 youth have been served through ETV funding.

An application process is in place which requires youth to provide information on financial need. The application process and a database will track services and expenditures to ensure that vouchers do not exceed the total cost of attendance or \$5,000 per year.

Currently, eligible youth access the ETV program through his/her Independent Living Program (ILP) Specialist. Eligible youth are those who currently qualify for Chafee services and are in the process of transitioning out of foster care or former foster care youth between the ages of 17.5 – 21. Foster and former foster care youth participating in ETV on their 21st birthday shall remain eligible until their 23rd birthday, provided they are making satisfactory progress. Post-secondary ETVs will also be offered to youth who were adopted or achieved legal guardianship after age 16.

Current and former foster care youth are eligible to receive the federally funded Pell Grants. CD requires all youth applying for ETVs to submit a copy of their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and an award letter from their chosen school providing all other financial aid awarded. Youth may choose to attend public, private or non-profit four-year universities or colleges, two-year community colleges, vocational/technical schools or specialized one-year training programs. Educational or training programs must be accredited/pre-accredited or certified. Youth must be willing to participate in federal Work Study program or work part-time.